

Written by Administrator
Sunday, 09 May 2021 14:37 -

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/zimbabwevigil/51165909141/sizes/m/>

President Mnangagwa can now handpick judges, as well as his own deputies, after the Senate approved an amendment to the 2013 Constitution – with the help of MDC-T collaborators.

Musa Kika, executive director of the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, said it was a sad milestone for democracy. ‘We are seeing Parliament blatantly ignoring the voice of the people who have clearly said they do not want these amendments . . . The message being sent is that the regime will seek power consolidation at all costs — even if it means mutilating an eight-year-old people’s constitution.’

Law expert Alex Magaisa said: ‘We are returning to a constitutionalised authoritarian regime. It is only the beginning of a process. By the time they are done with the amendments, the constitution will not be recognised from the one adopted through a referendum.’

He said the whole aim of the 2013 constitution had been to limit the powers of the president, but amendments supported by MDC-T have now given back the ‘draconian rule’ by Zanu PF. ‘Now that Zanu PF knows that they have sufficient stooges for consolidation of power, more amendments are on the way,’ he warned (see:

<https://www.zimbabwesituation.com/news/sad-day-for-democracy/>

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Dewa Mavhinga, head of Human Rights Watch in Southern Africa, urged organisations in Zimbabwe to challenge the development in court or hold protests. He said it threatened the rule of law by undermining the principle of separation of powers, putting excessive powers in the hands of the President (see: <https://www.voanews.com/africa/zimbabwe-opposition-accuses-government-trying-undermine-judiciary>).

Zimbabwean opposition and human rights groups held an online protest against the constitutional amendments on Thursday to avoid arrests because of the coronavirus lockdown and ban on public gatherings. One of the organisers, Jestina Mukoko, a director of the Zimbabwe Peace Project, said: 'Should we just allow a few people to amend the constitution? As Zimbabweans, should we allow ourselves to be short-changed? It removes the tenets that we want to aspire to get to as Zimbabweans: democracy, transparency and accountability. If these amendments are allowed to take root, it means what we will have at the end is a dictatorship' (see: <https://www.voanews.com/africa/zimbabwe-rights-groups-opposition-stage-online-protest-against-constitutional-amendments>).

A senior MDC-T official in Matabele North Province has resigned in protest over the faction's endorsement of the constitutional amendment bill. Noris Nyathi, a former deputy mayor of Victoria Falls, accused the faction's leader Douglas Mwonozora of failing to condemn the government's continued persecution of human rights and opposition activists. 'I consider it gross misconduct by our MPs, Senators including the presidium to give Zanu PF the needed two-thirds majority in order to pass the repressive Amendment Bill Number 2' (see: <https://allafrica.com/stories/202105060305.html>).

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MDC Alliance Deputy President Tendai Biti said the amendments, now signed into law by the President, were 'a total disaster for Zimbabwe's democracy' (see: <https://www.zimlive.com/2021/05/08/mnangagwa-signs-imperial-presidency-constitutional-amendments-into-law/>).

Other Points:

- It gives the Vigil no pleasure to remind people of our attitude to the long and expensive constitutional outreach programme, which we called the 'constitutional outrage' programme. We knew that the government would change the constitution at will.

- In the UK a petition has been launched 'Stop butchering the constitution of Zimbabwe'. It is addressed to the government of Zimbabwe and is the work of an organisation ZimrightsZ. It begins 'We the people of Zimbabwe have watched with utter disbelief the ongoing mutilation of the constitution of Zimbabwe by you our leaders who have pledged to defend the constitution'. To sign check: https://secure.avaaz.org/community_petitions/en/government_of_zimbabwe_stop_butchering_the_constitution_of_zimbabwe/?wEljlsb&utm_source=sharetools&utm_medium=twitter&utm_campaign=petition-1214270-stop_butchering_the_constitution_of_zimbabwe&utm_term=Eljlsb%2Ben

- Because of the coronavirus we can no longer physically meet outside the Zimbabwe Embassy in London, so we have a virtual Vigil while the restrictions continue. We ask our activists to put on Vigil / ROHR / Zimbabwe regalia and take a photo of themselves holding an appropriate poster reflecting our protest against human rights abuses in Zimbabwe. The photos are uploaded on our Flickr site: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/zimbabwевigil/albums/72157719124649803>. Our virtual Vigil activists today were Deborah Harry and Benjamin Molife who both kindly contributed to Vigil funds.

- For Vigil pictures check: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/zimbabwевigil/>. Please note: Vigil photos can only be downloaded from our Flickr website.

Notices:

- **The Restoration of Human Rights in Zimbabwe (ROHR)** is the Vigil's partner

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organization based in Zimbabwe. ROHR grew out of the need for the Vigil to have an organization on the ground in Zimbabwe which reflected the Vigil's mission statement in a practical way. ROHR in the UK actively fundraises through membership subscriptions, events, sales etc to support the activities of ROHR in Zimbabwe. Please note that the official website of ROHR Zimbabwe is <http://www.rohrzimbabwe.org/>

. Any other website claiming to be the official website of ROHR in no way represents us.

- **The Vigil's book 'Zimbabwe Emergency'** is based on our weekly diaries. It records how events in Zimbabwe have unfolded as seen by the diaspora in the UK. It chronicles the economic disintegration, violence, growing oppression and political manoeuvring – and the tragic human cost involved. It is available at the Vigil. All proceeds go to the Vigil and our sister organisation the Restoration of Human Rights in Zimbabwe's work in Zimbabwe. The book is also available from Amazon.

- **Facebook pages:**

Vigil: <https://www.facebook.com/zimbabwevigil>

ROHR: <https://www.facebook.com/Restoration-of-Human-Rights-ROHR-Zimbabwe-International-370825706588551/>

ZAF: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Zimbabwe-Action-Forum-ZAF/490257051027515>